

CHARRTS No.: SASC-12-066
Hearing Date: March 27, 2014
Committee: SASC
Member: Senator Inhofe
Witness: SecNavy Mabus, Jr.
Question: #66
Approved by: Mr. Lluy

Fighter Gap

Question: Secretary Mabus, in light of the shift to the Asian-Pacific theater and a greater need for electronic warfare capability, has the Navy acted too quickly in ending its procurement of Growler (EA-18G) aircraft?

Answer: In 2003 the Navy's plan was to only recapitalize its aging carrier based EA-6B squadrons with the EA-18G and disestablish all three EA-6B expeditionary squadrons. However, in 2011, the Navy decided to continue its role in expeditionary Airborne Electronic Attack (AEA) to meet increased demand for electronic attack missions by the joint warfighter. In 2012, the JROC validated a requirement for additional EA-18Gs which were included in the FY14 budget. Since the start of the EA-18G program, the Navy has continually assessed warfighting requirements much of which drove the Navy to increase its 2003 EA-18G inventory objective to today's 135 aircraft. The process of assessing warfighting needs continues today; however, the Navy must balance and prioritize its requirements within its fiscal constraints. Our FY 2015 President's Budget (PB-15) submission represents that balance and priority.

The PB-15 Unfunded Priority List (UPL) included 22 EA-18G aircraft. Items on the UPL are of no higher priority than what is contained in PB-15. The 22 EA-18G aircraft on the UPL identifies an area, should funds above those already requested in PB-15 become available, where an investment could be made in AEA to augment the Navy's existing force structure.